

Boudreau, Paul E

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To: Burger, David
Subject: RE: Renditions piece

RELEASED IN FULL

From: Pfeuffer, Paul
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2006 4:21 PM
To: Wohlers, Paul(Skopje); Milovanovic, Gillian A(Skopje); Hubler, Stephen A(Skopje); Orlansky, Michael D(Skopje)
Subject: FW: Renditions piece

From: Davidson, Terry R
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2006 10:09 AM
To: EUR-Directors; EUR-FO; EUR-Deskofficers-DL; EUR-PPD-DL
Subject: Renditions piece

Here's the UPI piece on renditions I mentioned at 9 a.m. meeting... Terry

Intl. Intelligence U.S.: EU Governments 'allowed Renditions' (STRANGE, UPI)
Saturday, March 11, 2006
United Press International
By HANNAH K. STRANGE, UPI U.K. Correspondent

LONDON, March 10 (UPI) -- U.S. flights conducting renditions of terror suspects have passed through Europe with the knowledge of European governments, a senior U.S. State Department official confirmed to United Press International Friday.

Speaking to UPI on condition of anonymity, the official said the United States would not and had not conducted renditions through Europe without the knowledge of European partners. There was a "sense of aggrievement" in Washington that European governments and citizens had benefited from information obtained through rendition, yet were now expressing "shock" at the policy.

"European governments and publics expect there to be broad, mutual intelligence cooperation," he said. "These are simply not the things that are talked about publicly."

On the eve of her European tour in December, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke of the cooperation of national governments in intelligence efforts that "helped protect European countries from attack, helping save European lives."

Asked whether those remarks meant European governments had knowingly allowed rendition flights to pass through their territory, the official replied: "Yes, that's exactly what that means. We would not conduct renditions in Europe without the knowledge of European partners."

The official would not confirm or deny whether rendition flights had passed through Britain, an allegation the British government denies. He would only say the idea that rendition flights had taken place through all the European countries where allegations were now surfacing was "absurd."

The allegations currently circulating in the European media were "mostly inaccurate," he said, adding that the suggestion that hundreds of rendition flights had passed through Europe was "simply absurd."

Those making such allegations were not distinguishing between what might have been simply intelligence flights, for example carrying intelligence officials, and what may have been rendition flights, he added. There were in fact only "two or three cases" in Europe in which any evidence that rendition had taken place had been put forward.

"If people were truly disappearing off the streets of Europe by the hundreds I think someone would have noticed," he

Questioned as to why terror suspects would be transferred abroad for interrogation if it was not to evade human rights protections, the official said that in the majority of cases, renditions took place because an individual captured in one country was wanted by another country.

"What happens is, all intelligence agencies around the world share information with each other and cooperate with each other," he said.

If an individual was picked up by the security services of one country, which then discovered that person was wanted by or was on the watchlist of another country, then instead of simply letting them go the security services would transfer them over, he explained.

"The United States is basically the only country in the world that has the intelligence services and the resources to perform such a service," he added.

If they were wanted in the United States, or suspected by the U.S. authorities of links to terrorism, they would in most cases be rendered back to the United States, he said.

Asked by UPI whether there were any cases in which an individual was wanted or suspected by U.S. authorities, and instead of being transferred to the United States were held by another country on behalf of the U.S., the official said he could not vouch for every single circumstance. There could be some cases in which individuals were held abroad on the behalf of the United States, he said, if another country had an interest in doing so.

"Contrary to what Europe thinks, we really do not want to become the world's jailers," he added.

But, he stressed, if the United States had any doubt about the recipient nation's human rights record, or had reasonable grounds to believe the individual could be mistreated, they would seek specific guarantees from that nation.

Questioned as to why such individuals could not be extradited, the official said that intelligence was often insufficient to extradite a person; therefore rendition was used to "get people who are beyond the reach of the law."

Giving a theoretical example of someone found to have received a telephone call from a person who then shortly after committed a terrorist attack, he asked: "Do we let someone like that simply disappear off into the ether? Frankly the rest of the world would not want people like that to be floating around."

The official stressed that rendition had been practiced "for many decades, by many countries," and until its recent recharacterization had been an "accepted practice and not a dirty word."

"Renditions are an important tool for all countries in fighting terrorism," he added.

The practice had been reviewed and upheld by the European Court of Human Rights, he said, specifically in the case of Carlos the Jackal, a terrorist captured in Sudan in 1994 and rendered back to France, where he is now imprisoned.

It used to be that finding terror suspects and bringing them to justice "was a heroic thing to do... people were applauding this," he continued.

"The purpose of rendition is not to send people where they could be tortured. It is to ensure that people who are wanted for terrorist acts around the world are brought to justice."

The United States shared an enormous amount of intelligence gathered as a result of renditions with European governments and felt there was now a certain degree of hypocrisy in their public displays of shock at the practice, he said.

The U.S. administration was concerned about the characterization of renditions as being wrong, illegal and always improper, he said, acknowledging the potential of that "misconception" for undermining efforts to spread democracy

"This image is damaging, but rather than stop doing them, we are trying to emphasize that there is value for all our societies, that we are not just doing it for ourselves."

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